



**Testimony of Sal Luciano
Executive Director, Council 4 AFSCME
Labor & Public Employees Committee Hearing
Middletown, CT – Feb. 24, 2015**

Good evening Representative Tercyak, Senator Holder-Winfield and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Sal Luciano. I am the Executive Director of Council 4 AFSCME. Our union represents 32,000 public service workers.

I also serve as President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, the statewide labor federation that is the voice of more than 230,000 workers in the public and private sector.

I am here to speak in opposition to several proposed bills that would make it more difficult to collect unemployment insurance and would either eliminate or undermine prevailing wage laws.

First, I'd like to say a few words about prevailing rate.

Proponents of legislation to limit or eliminate prevailing wages laws claim that the laws drive up the cost of construction. I've not seen any credible evidence that this is true. In fact, the opposite holds true. Connecticut's prevailing wage laws help to build a skilled, diverse and safe construction workforce while ensuring that projects are completed on time and within budget.

Weakening or suspending Connecticut's prevailing wage law will not reduce the costs of public construction, but it will seriously damage the state economy, costing hundreds of million of dollars in lost revenues. It would also take away jobs from people in our community, like the people in this room. This is not economic development. It's economic calamity.

I have similar concerns regarding the various raised bills that would make it harder to access unemployment benefits, such as waiting a week to receive benefits or requiring 30 days work for eligibility.

Unemployment insurance is a lifeline for workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. It's a system that also injects some consumer spending back into the economy.

With our high cost of living, Connecticut's maximum weekly benefit of \$590 hardly leaves the unemployed living in the lap of luxury. But it does prevent residents from losing their homes, having to pull children out of college or going on taxpayer-financed welfare. The system also provides a measure of consumer spending and confidence that helps, not hurts, the state economy.

In summary, the proposed assaults on prevailing wage and unemployment would move our state backward. It would be far preferable to seek new revenue sources by closing corporate tax loopholes and asking the ultra-wealthy to pay their fair share, rather than to weaken laws that help people stay in the ever-threatened middle class.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.